



**Town of Arlington, Massachusetts**  
**730 Massachusetts Ave., Arlington, MA 02476**  
**Phone: 781-316-3000**

**webmaster@town.arlington.ma.us**

## **School Committee Minutes 02-25-2003**

**THE ARLINGTON SCHOOL COMMITTEE**  
**REGULAR MEETING**  
**TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 25, 2003**  
**7:30 PM**

**Present:** David McKenna, Chair                      Joani LaMachia  
              Suzanne Owayda, Vice Chair                Denis Sullivan  
              Paul Schlichtman, Secretary                Martin Thrope  
              Barbara Goodman

Superintendent:                Kathleen Donovan  
Chief Financial Officer        David Kale  
Special Education Director:   Marilyn Bisbicos  
Student Representative:        Sean Garballey

**Absent:**                      Joanne Gurry

**Call to order: 7:35**

### **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

Arlington community member Liz Buchanan read a letter from other APS parents and community members supporting APS and the quality of education students received. The letter urged that careful consideration be used when implementing cuts and asked the Superintendent and School Committee to:

- .. Refuse to compromise the goal of small classes
  - .. Think "outside the box" to reduce expenditures
  - .. Consider offering programs for a fee or a higher fee if one is already in place
  - .. To follow through on a performance review of the principal and to revisit the guidance system at the high school.
- APS parent Cathy VandenHeuvel thanked APS for its continued support of fine arts education and Pasquale Tassone and Cheryl Hemenway for organizing the trip to Italy for the Honors Orchestra and Madrigal Singers. Ms. VandenHeuvel emphasized that the current budget crisis threatens to undermine this program and many others that are years in the making and urged Supt. Donovan and the School Committee to continue to seek resources to keep the fine arts program available for all students.

Supt. Donovan recognized AHS students Daniel Forman, Julia Manoli, and Elizabeth Scannell as finalists in the National Merit Scholarship Program.

Arlington High School senior Robert Worsham has received his Master Certification in the school's Microsoft Office User Specialist (MOUS) program.

### **BUDGET**

Department Heads, Elise Frangos, English Dept., Kathie Bodie, Math Dept., John Kent, Social Studies Dept, Tom Vaughn, Science Dept., Ray Smith, Foreign Language, and Mary Fischer Reading, spoke relative to how the cuts in the budget would affect their department. All spoke of the diminished quality of education for students and that entering 9<sup>th</sup> grade students would not have an equal educational experience as this years graduating class.

- .. Social Studies- Dr. Kent reported that grades K ,1,4, 8 would not comply with curricular changes under the 2002 History Framework of the 1993 Education Reform Act; increased class size at OMS will affect prep time for the 7<sup>th</sup> grade MCAS tests; the elimination of all advanced level offerings in grades 9-12 in addition to the elimination of other

course offerings plus class size of 25 or more will affect the teachers' ability to meet the needs of all students.

Science – Tom Vaughn reported that class size will increase due to the loss of science teachers and that it will be difficult to attract and retain high quality teacher. Additionally there will be a decrease of lab time with no additional time for freshman labs; the combination of two courses will result in only one college prep offering for freshman; elimination of science courses; the restructuring of the 6<sup>th</sup> clusters will result in losing two science teachers and one teacher for the 7<sup>th</sup> & 8<sup>th</sup> grades.

Foreign Language – Ray Smith described that at AHS Italian and German will be cut, funding from the Italian Ministry of Education will be lost as will as the annual trip to Italy for a AHS student funded by the Ministry; the loss of German will result in the demise of the Student Exchange Program, larger class size, fewer offerings and the expansion of the AP program will also stop. At OMS students may have to choose between a Foreign Language and technology courses that could result in reducing the offerings from three to two languages.

Math- Kathleen Bodie, addressed the requirements of the federal No Child Left Behind Act explaining that districts must meet five performance goals by the 2013-2014 school year. Fewer teachers and increased class size will make those goals difficult to meet. Cuts at AHS would mean the elimination of the IMP program, all advanced course levels, as well as other courses.

English - Elise Frangos explained that there would be no electives for students until grade 12; that increased class size will affect the time teachers have to devote to helping students with their college essay and applications; elimination of all advanced course offerings.

Reading – Mary Fischer explained that reading specialists fulfill multiple roles at the elementary level in addition to providing resources and support to the classroom teachers. The reduction of 6.5 reading specialists will hinder the goals of the NCLB federal mandate.

Supt. Donovan stated that the Town of Arlington has supported APS, that everyone is working together but that a \$7.5 million dollar cut would be impossible to implement. Mrs. Donovan stated that at the next school committee meeting the specialists would speak on how the budget cuts will affect their programs. The Superintendent also stated that the administration would start prioritizing programs to recall if there is an override.

Committee Members made it clear that the proposed budgets cuts are devastating for the school system and vowed to continue to advocate for sound education for APS. When questioned on what they would like to have back if there is a successful override the Department Heads were unanimous in stating teachers first. Tom Vaughn also emphasized that they (Dept. Heads) did not want any one program to be cut, that every program is important to students, be it chefs, preschool, technology or fine and performing arts.

As a point of personal privilege Mr. Schlichtman stated that there is a lot of passion for the public schools; commended the staff on the wonderful job that is being done; recognized that Arlington has the best elementary math program in the state; and vowed that the community and School Committee will fight with skill in maintaining our Town and school system

## **Break**

### **APPROVAL OF WARRANT**

Supt. Donovan requested approval of warrant 03111 in the amount of \$410,501.34. Mr. Schlichtman asked for clarification on the payment to the Department of Education in the amount of , \$7731.91.

Mrs. Donovan explained that the payment was in fact an overpayment by the DOE to APS to fund the Bay State Reader Summer Training Program. The DOE requested an estimate on how much money it would cost to run the training program, the \$7,731.91 was remaining after all costs from program were met.

On a motion by Ms. Owayda and seconded by Ms. Goodman it was unanimously

Voted to approve warrant #03111 in the amount of \$410,501.34

### **REPORT OF PTBC**

Ms. Owayda stated that there was no quorum at the last meeting and therefore had nothing new to report.

Supt. Donovan received an email from MASC relative to SBAB that stated that the legislature will take up a conference on the supplemental bill; included in that bill is language that would protect the SBAB project if filed by June 30, 2003.

MASC remains cautiously optimistic that the legislature will allow these projects to be added to the waiting list and find a way to fund. PTBC voted at their last meeting to continue on with the Stratton and Thompson and to be ready to submit them if allowed.

### **SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS**

#### **Budget Subcommittee**

Ms. LaMachia reported that at this meeting Attorney John Maher spoke relative to private fundraising in public schools. Mr. Maher outlined the guidelines; how to set up account, and the reporting process; the issue was referred to the policy and procedure subcommittee. The next steps include receiving information on State Aid and the Minuteman allocation, attending the task force meetings that have been set, prioritizing cuts over the next two meetings and a course of action for creating a budget with reductions while still maintaining integrity.

Supt. Donovan and David Kale reviewed the handout on the FY2003-2004 Budget, Task Force Listing, Reduction and

Budget Timeline. Mrs. Donovan noted that each task force has set dates for meetings and (Health Insurance, State & Local Aid, Special Education Out-of-District Student Placement, Pension & Reserve and New Revenues) include members from the Town, the Board of Selectman, the School Committee and the Community.

Chair McKenna cautioned members on the subject of unfair labor practice in the discussion of health insurance and also questioned the purpose of the various subcommittees since the town already has established committees in most areas.

#### **Specialized Student Services**

Ms. Goodman reported that at its meeting of 2/24 the subcommittee discussed 1) Massachusetts Trends in Special Education 2) Arlington Trends and Data, 3) Arlington three-year projections and 4) Types of disabilities served in Out-of-District placements. Ms. Goodman stated at the next subcommittee meeting (to be scheduled tentatively March 12<sup>th</sup> or 18<sup>th</sup>) the subcommittee will work on how to present the data in an accessible way with three-year projections, to make recommendations and to implement an action plan to reduce costs if possible. Ms. Goodman requested the Special Education Director Marilyn Bisbicos compile data on how APS has been proactive in creating new programs and saving money.

#### **New Business**

Mr. Schlichtman attended a meeting of the Redevelopment Board where they discussed surplus school property. The Redevelopment Board would be interested in speaking to the School Committee about how revenues from existing school property (i.e Gibbs School) could generate revenue to advance the rebuild project without touching the school systems' operating budget. Mr. Schlichtman requested that this be it placed as an agenda item for discussion.

Chairman David McKenna brought to the Committees' attention a notice promoting Arlingtons Public Schools "State of the Schools Address". Mr. McKenna pointed out that the notice was unclear as to who was sponsoring the event and who would be speaking with along with Supt. Donovan.

Supt. Donovan explained a state of the schools forum is one of the district goals and that she would invite the principals to also speak.

#### **REPORT ON MCAS**

Supt. Donovan stated that a discussion of the MCAS was requested as an agenda item for discussion.

Mr. Thrope made the following motion seconded by Mr. Schlichtman:

Resolved that the Arlington School Committee will continue to award diplomas to all students who meet local performance standards based upon multiple assessments as indicated in the Education Reform Act of 1993.

Mr. Schlichtman moved to postpone the vote until the May 27<sup>th</sup> School Committee meeting. Mr. Schlichtman's motion to postpone was seconded by Mr. Sullivan.

Mr. Thrope pointed out that the full committee has discussed the MCAS issue as well as the curriculum and instruction subcommittee and does not see the point of waiting any longer to take a stand.

Speaking to the motion to postpone. Mr. Schlichtman pointed out that the ASC has passed resolutions in the past supported by MASC; MASC and its Board of Directors is monitoring the legal challenge of the MCAS. The question is "Does a school committee have the right to issue a diploma or is the DOE overstepping its authority"? Mr. Schlichtman emphasized that the courts will make the decision; furthermore Mr. Schlichtman stated that at this point he is not willing to compromise the identity and confidentiality of the student/s without consulting with the family/s whether or not they want their child used as a political statement for APS. In addition Mr. Schlichtman stated it may not be an issue in June and that at the May 27<sup>th</sup> meeting there will be a new chairperson and two new school committees members who would be impacted by such a vote.

The remaining committee members agreed that the decision will be made in the courts, that there is no student to advocate for at this point, they do not want to spend money on legal fees or want to battle against the State.

Ms. Owayda stated that she was not necessarily opposed to the motion but was not ready to approve it either; Ms. Owayda would like to hear another legal opinion and a definition of what constitutes "multiple assessments". Chairman David McKenna ruled the original motion out of order and asked that Mr. Thrope's exact wording be sent to the school attorney for a legal opinion.

Mr. Thrope challenged the ruling of the chair.

On a Motion by Ms. Owayda and seconded Ms. Goodman

Voted to support the Chairman's motion. Roll Call: 5- 2 motion carries (Mr. Schlichtman & Mr. Thrope no)

#### **ACCREDITATION REPORT**

The School Committee received the report and will discuss it at the next school committee meeting. (March 11, 2003).

#### **GUIDANCE UPDATE**

Placed on the next agenda

Upon a motion made by Mr. Sullivan and seconded by Ms. LaMachia it was  
Voted to enter into executive session for the purpose of  
With no further business to be conducted upon return to open session. RC:

EXECUTIVE SESSION from 10:20 to 10:55 PM

On a motion by Mr. Sullivan and seconded by Mr. Thrope it was unanimously  
Voted to adjourn @ 10:55 pm.

Submitted by  
Karen Tassone  
Committee Secretary